AN EARLY RAGAMALA FROM THE KANKROLI COLLECTION

Sridhar Andhare

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The old temple collection of the Mahārājā of Kānkroli[1] has many splendid *Rāgamālā* sets, and other paintings, portraits of Rajasthani chiefs, etc. with dated inscriptions and place names hitherto unknown. The collection there provides important material for the study of Rajasthani painting, but little has been published so far. From this choicest collection of miniatures comes an important set of the so-called Popular Mughal painting, which, due to its unusual style and colouring, deserves a detailed study.

Unfortunately, the total number of illustrations available is thirty-five, the last being lost, therefore the possibility of the colophon which is generally at the end, is ruled out. It was also informed by the owners that this page had a seal at the back. Therefore, the date and provenance will have to be determined by comparison with other similar documents and evidence available from published material.

Painted in a vertical format of 17.8× 22.8 cm. size, these illustrations have no text matter on the top margin but the names of *Rāgas* appear on the facing page in Persian characters and also above the painting; it is apparent on careful observation that the set was previously bound in a volume which must have been split up into loose folios. There is, however, little relevance between the captions and the *Rāga* illustrations but by and large the set fits into the table of *Rāgamālās* by the school of Hanumāna[2] whose classification is followed by Dāmodara, Harivallava and other authors with minor variations in northern Indian or the Hindustani system of classical muisc.

The entire set is painted in extremey perfunctory manner within the traditional framework and feeling of the Mughal painting of the late Akbar period except for the colour scheme which appears altogether new in com-

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[1] Kānkroli, a small estate in Rajasthan, and primarily the seat of the Dwārkādhīsh, one of the seven forms of Kṛishṇa, is situated forty miles from Udaipur and six miles from the famous Nāthadwārā. The Gosain of Kānkroli is the descendant of the third son of Bitthal Nāthji Mahārāj, the eldest son of Vallabhāchārya who lived in the 16th century. This place of the Vaishṇavas had close relationship with the rulers of Amber since 17th century and later with Jaipur in the 18th and 19th centuries. It is quite likely that fresh material from this collection will yield some important data for the study of miniature paintings especially that of Amber and Jaipur. I am thankful to Sri Vrajabhushanji Maharaj of Kānkroli for allowing me to publish this set. Photo credits to Dr. Pramod Chandra, Professor of Indian Art, Chicago University, U.S.A.

[2] O. C. Ganguly. *Rāgas & Rāgiṇis.* Vol. I, text, Bombay, Reprint, 1948, Appendix 33, p. 220.

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parison with the known groups of so called Popuar Mughal paintings[3] of late Akbar and early Jahangir periods.

The compositons are repetitive. In most pictures open landscapes, the rocky foregrounds and large trees with big circuar leaves painted partly yellow and blue green occupy the major space of the composition (Fig. 40) leaving the the figure in the open inconspicuously. The architecture is confined to hexagonal or square open pavilions with very slender pillars, patterned enclosure walls, tiled domes and floorings, etc. In certain cases triple domed tiled pavilions (Fig. 44) are also found. The open spaces are interspersed with large floral and leafy sprays (Fig. 42). Only two or three tree types are used, the more usual ones have roundish leaves which at times give a faint idea of a *pipal* tree; at places the Mughal mannerism of showing the roots is also attempted (Figs. 40 and 41). In many illustrations the foreground is left plain or is intended to represent a garden or open courtyard with a gate, etc. (Fig. 41). There appears a curious feature in using a flower vase or an ewer in the composition (Fig. 42). These vases painted in black or in white sometimes recall their Kashmir origin when compared with enamelled ewers from that area. Whether these vases are a deliberate space filling device is not known. However, it is interesting to note that such types of vases do not occur in any known sets of Popular Mughal painting.

The male figures are somewhat short; they usually wear half *dhotī* with a fan-like pleated protrusion in front and a short *aṭpaṭī* (?) turban. A long and narrow patterned *dupaṭṭā* is worn over the neck, the ends going under the armpits. There also appears a second type of turban which by and large could be assigned to the late Akbar period (detail of Fig. 37). It is surprising to note again in this set that there is not a single instance where we see a male figure wearing a *jāmā* or a *chūrīdār paijāmā*.[4]

An added emphasis seems to have been to the female figures. They are generally clad in a *ghāghrā*, *chōlī* and a transparent *oḍhnī* with fluttering ends. The body is unduly elongated with a small head, narrow waist and developed hips. A long and thin single plait follows the contour of the body at the back and black pompons are seen attached to its ends. Exceptionally large and round pompons are attached to the waist, and the fan-like pleated protrusion is also seen in front of the *ghāghrā*. Pearl ornaments decorate the head, neck and arms.

A distinguishing feature of the set is the use of small sprays, invariably

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[3] Karl Khandalavala, Moti Chandra and Pramod Chandra. *Miniature Paintings:* A Catalogue of the Exhibition of the Sri Motichand Khajanchi Collection held by the Lalit Kalā Akademi—New Delhi, 1960 and see Pramod Chandra, "Ustād Sālivāhana and the development of popular Mughal art," *Lalit Kalā*, No. 8, 1960, Bombay, 1960, pp. 25-46.

[4] In this illustration of *Rāga Vasant*, we see a strange type of half *jāmā* which resembles to a type of short skirt. It is held by a thin *kamarband*, the ends of which almost touch the ground.

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in olive green and yellow interspersed throughout. The indiscriminate use of this motif disturbs the composition. This early Mughal element is observed in many Mughal manuscript illustrations of the *Akbar Nāmā*,[5] the *Bābur Nāmā*[6] and others. The colour scheme of this set is also unusual. The colour scheme is very cool and pleasant. Strange shades of greys, blues and orange with mixtures of olive-green, lemon yellow and whites are largely used. In no illustration do we come across the warm and bright hues of the early Mughal palette. This to me indicates to their unmistakable origin of some Rajasthani provenance, perhaps Amber or elsewhere. In the illustrations of some *Rāgās* we see the rain suggested by tiny white lines. Usually in *Rāgamālā* sets we see the depiction of rain in the *Rāga Megha-Malhār,* or *Megh,* but in this set the painter has used this device in *Rāga Megha-Malhār, Rāga Vasant, Rāga Hiṇḍol* and *Kedār*. The landscape, which is cleverly minimised to few rocky areas in the background and the foreground, a tree or two in the middle plain where the ground is usually studded with leafy sprays, serves as an appropriate stage for the artist to express the spirit of the *Rāga.* The sky is always cloudy with strokes of grey, black and white lines representing movement. Perspective is almost elementary. There is little attempt to show distance by reducing the size of objects at a distance and the temples, houses and other structures are suggested in a very amateurish way.

The overall execution of the *Rāgamālā*, the colouring and style, sets one thinking on its stylistic affinities. On the one hand it is perfunctory and folkish work with unusual colouring and on the other it shows early Mughal features in male and female types, landscape, and other details of an unknown provincial centre of painting of a very early period, at least between *c.* 1590-1600 if not earlier.

Although it is true that Akbar's imperial atelier set standards for the superior quality of a state-patronized painting, less important works were being produced by some of the painters employed by noblemen in the late Akbar and early Jahangīr period. This so called Popular Mughal Art[7] was being practised at Ajmer, Agra, Lahore, or other prominent centres of Mughal culture. However, it has recently been observed that the so called "Popular Mughal" painting was being produced well within the later Akbar period and that private establishments of painters were already at work. About the Hindu patronage to painting during the Akbar period, history is not clear except for some historical facts and some notable discoveries of dated and

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[5] S. I. Tulayev, 4. Scenes from the Akbar Namah (*Akbar Nama* of the Victoria & Albert Museum, London), *Mārg*, Vol. XI, No. 3, June 1958, pp. 53-55.

[6] S. I. Tulayev, "3. Miniatures from a 16th Century Manuscript—"*Babur Namah,*" (from National Museum, New Delhi) *Mārg*, Vol. XI, No. 3, June 1958, pp. 45-52.

[7] Karl Khandalaval, Moti Chandra and Pramod Chandra. *Miniature Paintings.* A Catalogue of the Exhibition of the Sri Motichand Khajanchi Collection held by the Lalit Kalā Akademi—New Delhi, 1960 and see Pramod Chandra, "Ustād Sālivāhana and the development of "popular Mughal art", *Lalit Kalā* No. 8, 1960, Bombay", 1960, pp. 25-46.

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inscribed MSS. and other material from Amber and Jaipur region which throw some light on the art of painting, which had remained unattended so far. With the help of this material now it is apparent that Amber, the capital of the Kachhawāhās since the rule of Bihāri Mall—Bahār Mall—Bhār Mall—(1548-1575) whose daughter was married to Akbar in 1587, Bhagvantdāsa, (1575-1592) and later on during the reign of Mān Singh (1556-1614) had a rich cultural heritage with strong Hindu character which must have patronized painting during Akbar period (1556-1605). The discoveries of the murals on the *chhatrīs* of Bhār Mall[8] and the murals on the Jahangīr's garden pavilion at Bairāt[9] as well as the recent discoveries of wall paintings at Bhavpurā[10] and Mozmābād[11] near Jaipur, and a Digambara Jain MS. of *Adipurāṇa*[12] painted at Mozmābād in A.D. 1606, give adequate proof of the Hindu and Jain patronage to painting which, stylistically speaking, falls within the framework of Rajasthani version of the provincial Mughal art which was being practised in the Kachhawāhā region at Amber and Jaipur at least from the period of Rājā Mān Singh (1556-1614).

There are yet some more historical facts and documents which lend support to the theory of the existence of the late Akbari school of painting in Western India, Gujarat and Rajasthan. According to Moti Chandra[13] "Painters in Gujarat played an important part in the Mughal atelier of Akbar. Soon the pupils of these painters spread out in search of their livelihood to Gujarat and Rajasthan and this laid the foundation of the Popular Mughal style. This is a style in which though the figure drawing and costumes and to a very limited extent the landscape are indebted to the Mughal style yet the older traditions both in colour and landscape persist". In this Popular Mughal style, the Mughal style is simplified in a folk style which was used very extensively for satisfying the popular demand.

It is true that all the Mughal artists were not attached to the atelier of Akbar but some of the Mughal grandees also had well equipped atelier, in which talented artists painted illustrated MSS. Among such grandees was the famous Khān-i-Khānān[14] (Abd-al-Rahīm-Khān-i-Khānān) (1556-1617) the

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[8] H. Goetz, The Early Rajput Murals of Bairāt (Ca. A.D. 1587), *Ars Orientalis*, Vol. I, 1954, p. 117. (Since Bhārmall died in 1584, and Bhagvantdāsa in A.D. 1589 and the *chhatris* generally were erected soon after the death of a ruler, the dates of their paintings cannot be much later which though fragmentary now, show clear Akbarī character).

[9] *Ibid.*, pp. 113-118.

[10] Kaıl Khandalavala, *Amber* (Portfolio), Lalit Kalā Akademi, Bombay (in press).

[11] *Ibid.*

[12] Sarayu Doshi has recently discovered a number of dated Digambara Jain MSS. which she has incorporated in her Ph.D. thesis *Illustrated Manuscripts from Digambara Jain Bhaṇḍāras*, Bombay, 1971 (Unpublished).

[13] Moti Chandra and Umakant Shah, "New Documents of Jaina paintings", *Shri Mahavira Jaina Vidyalaya Golden Jubilee Volume*, Pt. I, Bombay, 1968, p. 356.

[14] M. Mahfuzul Haq. "The Khan Khanan and his painters, illuminators and caligraphists", *Islamic Culture*, Vol. V, No. 4, Hyderabad, Oct. 1931, p. 621.

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great general of Akbar and the son of the famous Bayrām Khān, who had gathered around him a galaxy of some talented artists of this period.

Usually Khān Khānān appears in the role of a great commander and a capable administrator, but he was equally great as a poet, linguist and a connoisseur. "He was a generous patron of savants, poets, painters and penmen." He was twice the Governor of Gujarat from (1575-78) and from (1584-89).[15] During his tenure in Gujarat or even when he was at Multan and Bhakkar[16] it is quite likely that local talents might have been attracted towards him and were employed on painting commissions of the less important MSS. of local interest such as the *Rāgamālās* and the secular subjects like the *Mādhavānala Kāmakandalā Chaupāi* etc. Fortunately, it has been possible here to study two colophons of the above mentioned manuscripts. The *Mādhavānala Kāmakandalā Chaupāi*[17] as per colophon (Fig. 47) was written in V.S. 1616/1559 A.D. at Jaisalmer by Kuśalalābha and the present copy was written (perhaps painted also) in V.S. 1660/A.D. 1603. In the same colophon, Chaupāi No. 42 indicates a valuable clue to support that the MS. may have been copied and perhaps painted also in Jaisalmer.

It mentions "*Rāula Mālasu paṭṭa dhara, kuṁvara Śrī Harirāj, virachī ae śṛiṁgāra rasa*.....etc." i.e Rāwala Śrī Hari Rāj, possessor of the *paṭṭā* of Mālasu (Village) composed this MS.

Apparently Mālasu appears to be the name of a village in Jaisalmer state and the Bhāṭṭis are the descendants of Rao Māldeo and are styled as *paṭṭāyats* from *Bāru*[18] who had eighteen small villages under them.

Rāwal Māldeo[19] who came to the throne in V.S. 1607/A.D. 1550 had seven sons; Harirāj, Bhawānidās, Khetsi, Nārāyaṇdās, Sāhasmall, Netsi and Pūraṇmall. After the death of Rāwal Māldeo in V.S. 1618/A.D. 1561 his son Rāwal Hari Rāj came to the throne. He was awarded titles at the court of Emperor Akbar and he extended his territories to a great extent. Rāwal

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[15] R. Pinder-Wilson, "An Illustrated Mughal Manuscript from Ahmadabad," *Paintings from Islamic Lands*, Oxford, 1969, pp. 160-171.

[16] R. Ettinghausen, *Paintings of the Sultans and Emperors of India in American Collections*, Bombay, 1961. Pl. 3. Text.

[17] Shyam Manohar Pandeya. *Madhyayugīn Premākhyāna* (Hindi). Allahabad, 1967. p. 105. The Story of *Mādhavānala Kāmakandalā* was very famous in the middle ages, Gaṇapati, composed his first essay on *Mādhavānala Kāmakandalā* in V.S. 1584/A.D. 1527. Subsequently Mādhava Sharma wrote his *Mādhavānala Kāmakandalā rasa vilās* in Brajabhāshā in V.S. 1600/A.D. 1543 of which one complete version is in the Hindi Sahitya Sammelana, Prayāg, and with this story as a base, poet Kushalalābha wrote the *Chaupāi* of *Mādhavānala Kāmakandalā* in Jaisalmer in V.S. 1616/A.D. 1559 (see Fig. 47) which according to the last lines of the colophon was completed in V.S. 1660/A.D. 1603 and the last lines are missing. Nine folios including the colophon are in the Berlin Museum in Germany.

[18] J. Tod. *Annals and Antiquities of Rajasthan*, Vol. II, Bombay, 1920, p. 1245.

[19] Mahākavīrāja Syāmaldāsa, *Vīr Vinod*, Pt. II (Hindi), Chapters 14-20, p. 1762.

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Bhīm[20] was the successor of Hari Rāj who occupied the *gaddī* of Jaisalmer in V.S. 1634/A.D. 1578. Thus, it is apparent that Rāwal Hari Rāj composed this *chaupāi* somewhere between A.D. 1561 to 1578 during his reign. Unfortunately the colophon in red is incomplete which might have yielded the place of its production, but on the basis of the above details of the colophon it can be surmised that the paintings were also done at Jaisalmer which has always been an important centre of painting since earlier times. The colophon of *Rāgamālā*[21] set is reproduced in colour in the Berlin Museum Catalogue bearing the date as V.S. 1662/A.D. 1605 has a strong Rajasthani character. Pinder-Wilson[22] has published an illustrated MS. of the *Anwār-i-Suhaylī,* the Persian translation of the *Kalilā-wā-Dimnā* dated A.H. 1009/A.D. 1600-1601 painted at Ahmedabad from the British Museum (OR. 6371). The delicacy of line, the colour scheme and the general trend of this MS. is identical to that of the *Gīta Govinda*[23] folio from the late Sir Cowasji Jehangir Collection, Bombay, which was attributed by Khandalavala to Popular Mughal school of A.D. 1595-1600 (Figs. 48 and 49). These could now be ascribed to a Rajasthani or Gujarati provenance as a number of dated and inscribed Digambara Jain and Hindu MSS. have been recently discovered from Rajasthan and Gujarat.[24] They are from Jaisalmer, Patan, Khambat, Katch, Vadnagar, Idar, Sirohi, Amber, Jaipur, etc. which include some early ones in the Popular Mughal style. It is, therefore, evident that the Popular Mughal painting is not an isolated phenomenon of northern India but it is applicable to all the Akbarī paintings produced in Rajasthan.

In the case of an unusual fragmentary *Rāgamālā*[25] from the Khajanchi Collection, Khandalavala and others have attributed this set to Agra or to some other centre of Mughal painting. These paintings have a somewhat folkish character and according to Moti Chandra they fall within the second category of the Popular Mughal painting which have only a partial resemblance to Mughal painting. They appear to be early examples of Rajasthani painting. It is also surprising to note that these paintings have certain similarities with the *Laud Rāgamālā.*[26] The comparison of Figs. 48 and 49 with *Laud Rāgamālā* plates VII, IX, XVI, XVIII shows striking similarities in the tree types, certain architectural details, especially on *chhajās* and lintels of the pavilions which are invariably decorated with grape-vine meanders, and the fort like parapets at the base of the dome; the pillars and capitals as well as the pink *chhajās* have identical colouring and technique. The colour scheme of these two

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[20] *Ibid.,* p. 1763.

[21] H. Härtel, Volker Moeller, G. Bhattacharya, *Museum Für Indische Kunst Berlin. Catalogue* 1971. Col. Pl. Kat. Nr. 219.

[22] R. Pinder-Wilson, *op. cit.,* pp. 160-171.

[23] Karl Khandalavala and Moti Chandra, *Miniatures and Sculptures* from the collection of the late Sir Cowasji Jehangir, Bart., Bombay, 1965, Colour Pl. D. and fig. 16.

[24] Moti Chandra and Umakant Shah, "New Documents of Jaina painting," pp. 348-420.

[25] Karl Khandalavala, Moti Chandra and Pramod Chandra, *op. cit.,* Frontispiece—Rāginī Gaurī and fig. 22.

[26] H. J. Stooke and Karl Khandalavala, *The Laud Ragamala Miniatures,* Oxford, 1953.

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sets are surprisingly similar. The female figures are also identically decorated with large pompons and tassels. The sky and landscape also appear to have been painted in the same manner. A similar picture representing a "Procession with elephants and horses"[27] has been published which has the pale colour scheme with abundance of mauve and pale yellow as the background which could be ascribed to a Rajasthani provenance of Amber or elsewhere. The Manley *Rāgamālā*[28] on careful observation also falls within this category and therefore could be attributed to a Rajasthani provenance.

On the basis of the bold Devanāgrī script which occurs on the top margin or at the back of the paintings of this style, it is also possible to suggest about their Rajasthani provenance. The two colophons referred above and the script that appears on both sides of the Cowasji *Gīta Govinda* folio is predominantly Jain type Rajasthani script in vogue in Western India, Gujarat and Rajasthan all along but is nearly absent in the northern Indian examples of the Popular Mughal MSS. or paintings that we know of.

Therefore, taking notice of all the dated and stylistically similar material in its historical context it is reasonable to attribute the folkish versions of the late Akbarī style paintings to Rajasthani or Gujarati provenances. Probably Amber or Jaisalmer could be the centre of their origin.[29]

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[27] P. Pal, *Allen Memorial Art Museum Bulletin*, Vol. XXVIII-No. 2, 1971, Oberlin, Ohio, Frontispiece.

[28] Leigh Ashton (Ed.), *Art of India and Pakistan*, London, 1949, Pl. 88, fig. 401.

[29] I am obliged to Dr. Moti Chandra for his valuable guidance in preparing this article.

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Fig. 37a. Rāga Bibhāsa. Early Rajasthani *c.* 1590-1600 A.D. Sri Vrajabhushanji Maharaja of Kankroli Collection.

Fig. 38a. Rāginī Toḍī. Same MS. as fig. 37a.

Fig. 37b. Detail of fig. 37a.

Fig. 38b. Detail of fig. 38a.

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Fig. 39. Rāga Hiṇḍol. Early Rajasthani. *c.* 1590-1600 A.D. Sri Vrajbhushanji Maharaja of Kankroli Collection.

Fig. 40. Rāginī Kakubha. Same MS. as fig. 39.

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Fig. 41. Rāga Vasant. Early Rajasthani. *c.* 1590-1600 A.D. Sri Vrajabhushanji Maharaja of Kankroli Collection.

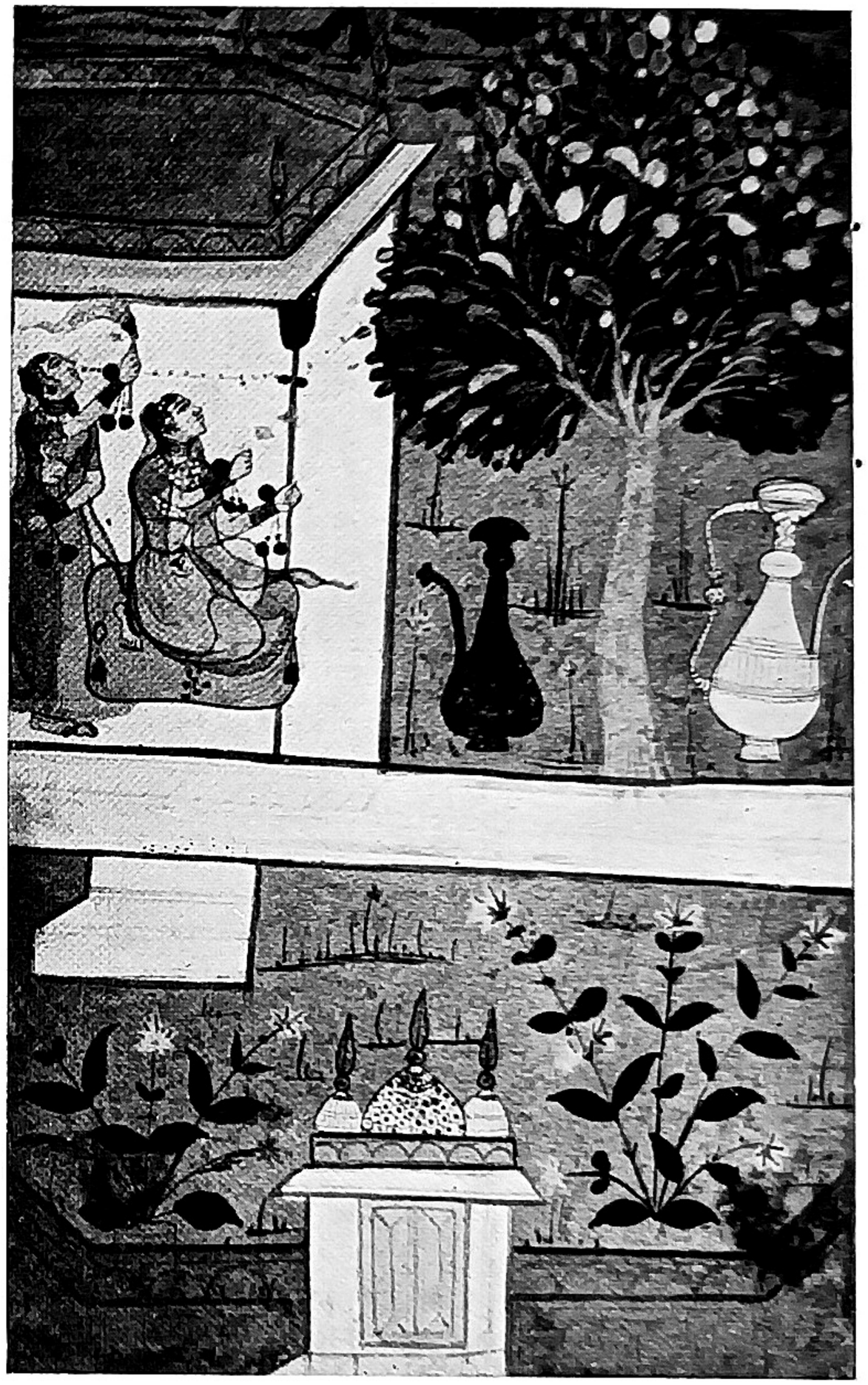

Fig. 42. Rāginī Paṭamañjarī. Same MS. as fig. 41.

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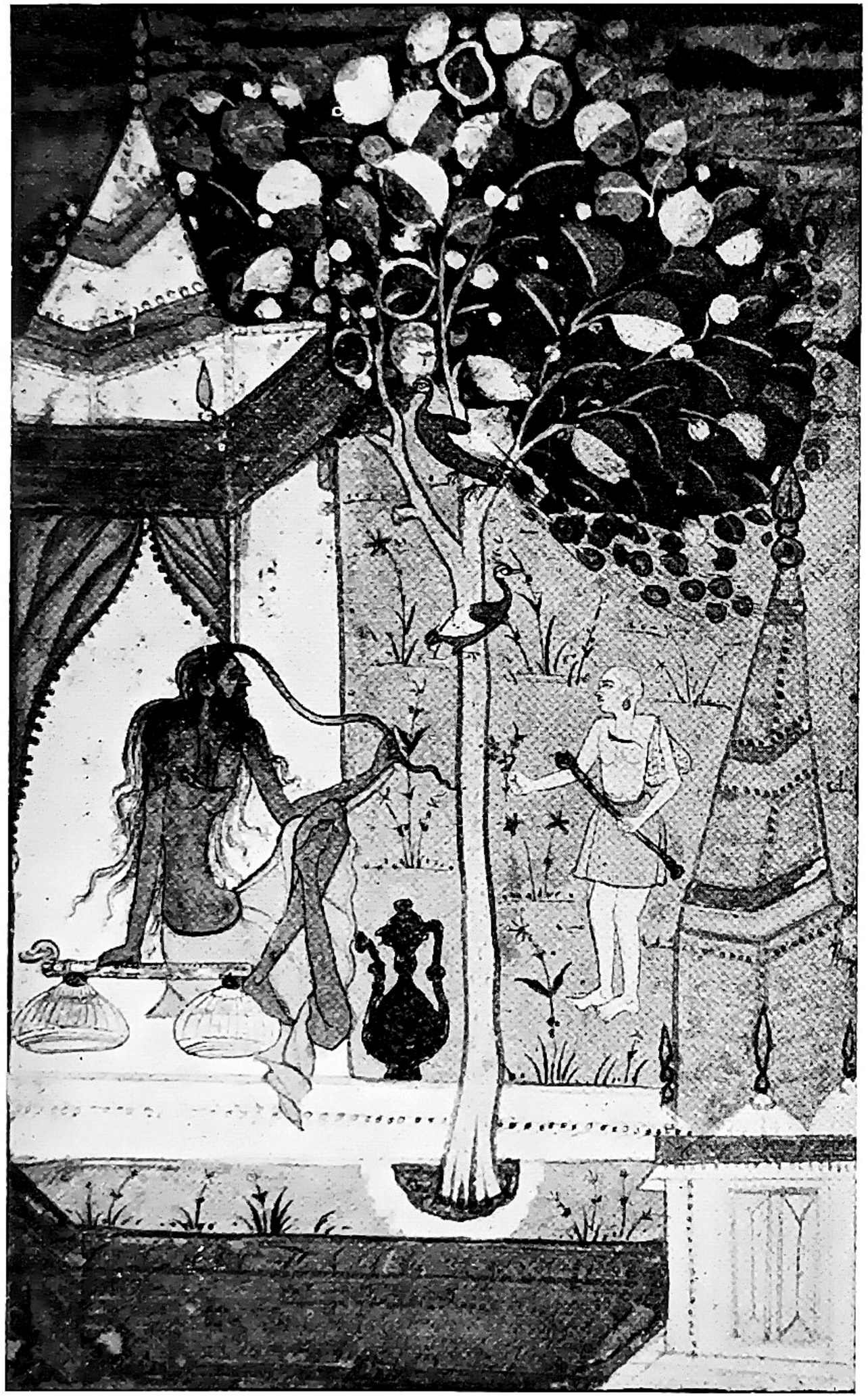

Fig. 43. Rāga Devagāndhāra. Early Rajasthani. *c.* 1590-1600 A.D. Sri Vrajabhushanji Maharaja of Kankroli Collection.

Fig. 44. Rāga Lalit. Same MS. as fig. 43.

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Fig. 45. Rāginī Bhairavī. Early Rajasthani. *c.* 1590-1600 A.D. Sri Vrajabhushanji Maharaja of Kankroli Collection.

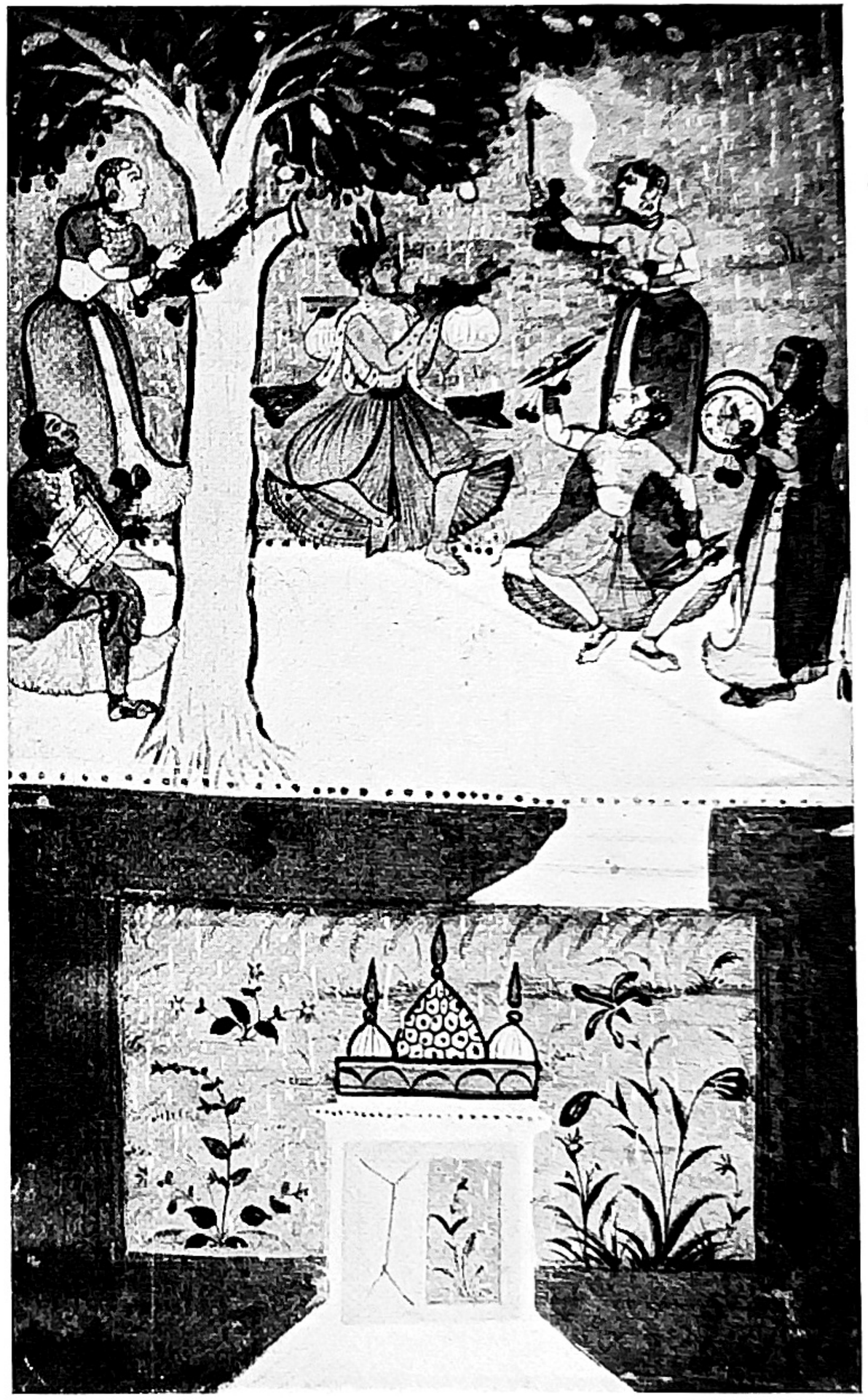

Fig. 46. Rāga Megha-Malhār. Same MS. as fig. 45.

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Fig. 48. Rāginī Kakubha. Early Rajasthani. *c.* 1605 A.D. Formerly in Khajanchi Collection, Bikaner.

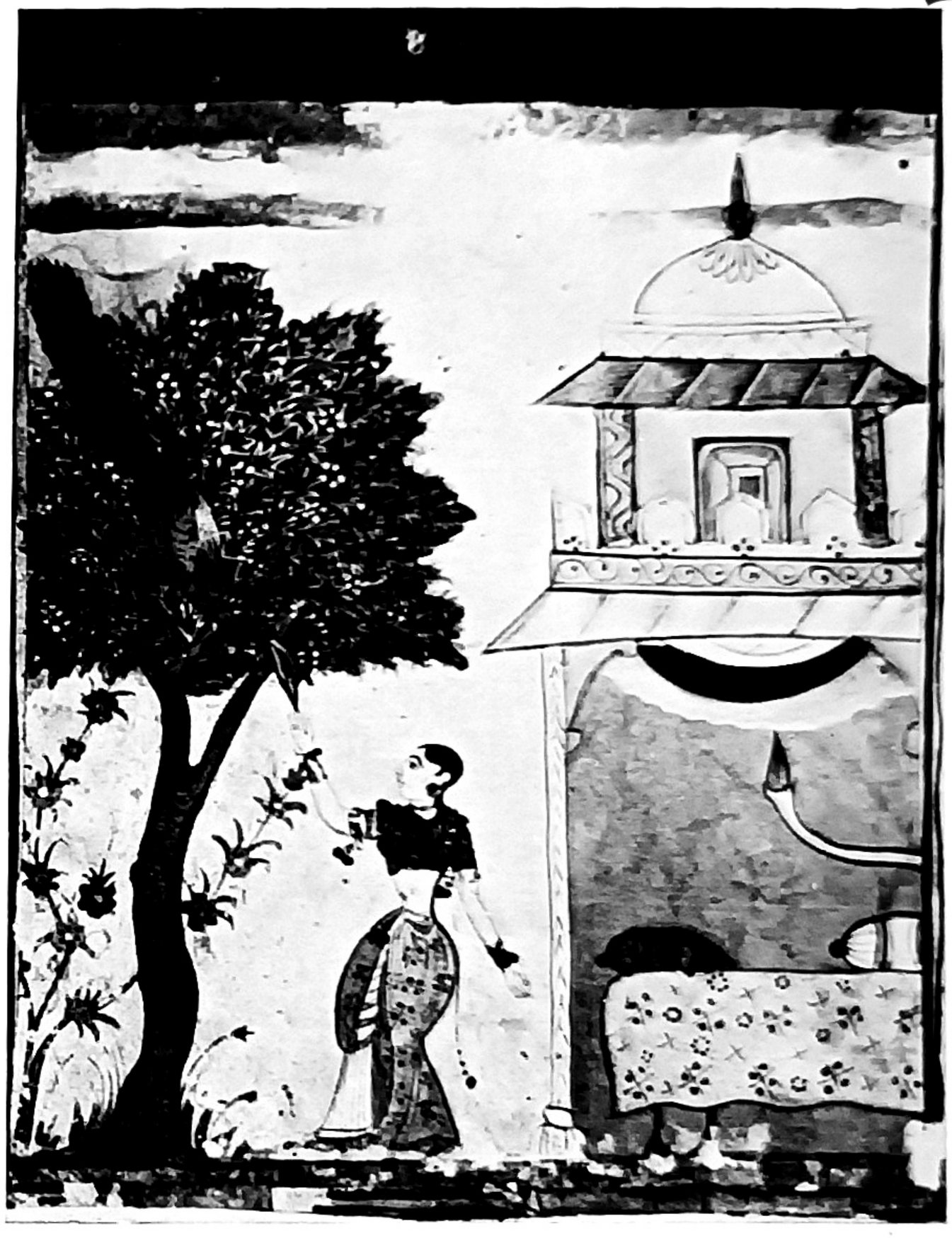

Fig. 49. Rāginī Madhu Mādhavī. Same MS. as fig. 48.

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